

We are pleased to announce the Conference:

## **TV Supervillains. Comics Ecosystems on Television: The Cognitive Impact of Supervillains**

Universidad de Sevilla (Spain), February 12-14, 2020

### INTRODUCTION

We invite you to participate in the TV Supervillains Conference. Comics Ecosystems on Television: The Cognitive Impact of Supervillains, which will take place in the School of Communication (Av. Americo Vespucio, s/n. 41092-Sevilla) on February 12 to 14, 2020.

“So we meet at last, eh? It was inevitable that we should clash!”, thus spoke the Ultra-Humanite when he first came face to face with Superman eighty years ago. Possibly the earliest comic-book supervillain, Ultra was almost the exact opposite of the Man of Steel mentally, physically and morally. From mythology and folklore to literature and mass media, supervillains in the form of monsters, mad scientists, criminal masterminds, enemy commanders, and evil doppelgangers predated comic-book superheroes; but, somehow, the appearance of the supervillain came to complete the classic formula of the superhero genre.

A quarter of a century before Hitchcock expressed his “unwritten law: the more successful the villain, the more successful the picture”, comic-book writer Abner Sundell had already remarked, “On the strength of good super-villains, comics have changed from mediocre sellers to smash hits”. Indeed, there was a sense of inevitability to the clash between superhero and supervillain, once, and again, and again –for recurrence is one of the defining characteristics of the supervillain: they cannot stay dead. Foregrounding the variation-and-repetition dynamics so dear to popular narratives, Umberto Eco wrote that Superman’s stories develop in an indefinitely prolonged series of plots without consumption.

And what better figure to become the target, *raison d’être*, and heatsink of superheroic efforts than the supervillain? They are larger than life; and they are larger than death, too. We love to hate them, and probably we should hate to love them; but most often they steal the show from their do-gooder nemeses. So much so that some of them have become the protagonists of their own narratives; while the borders between superheroes and supervillains blur and even vanish. Locked in a never-ending struggle, superheroes and supervillains have overrun the boundaries of comics narratives to flood over film and television.

With particular attention to aesthetics and cognitive value of television serial narratives, the TV Supervillains Conference is conceived as a forum for the celebration of and reflection on the rich history and current phenomenon of supervillainy, both as a specific superhero-genre convention and an influence on other generic realms.

The conference official languages are: Spanish and English.

Paper proposals, including author, affiliation, email, brief CV (no more than 150 words), paper title, and abstract (no more than 300 words; including essential references), should be submitted by **November 30, 2019**.

Submission of paper proposals and questions via email: [tv supervillains@us.es](mailto:tv supervillains@us.es)

The organizing committee will communicate decisions about the acceptance of proposals by December 14, 2019.

## THEMATIC LINES

Topics along which papers are to be organized in this conference include, but are not limited to:

Archetypes and predecessors in myths, legends, folklore, fairy tales, Gothic novels, penny bloods, penny dreadfuls, story papers, dime novels, film serials, comic strips, radio shows, pulps...

Supervillains in popular seriality: serial characters, iconic serial figures, stock characters, narratives of proliferation, commercial storytelling, recursivity, transtextuality, makeovers, media changes...

Possible relationships between aesthetic construction of supervillains and cognitive aspects, e. g., how / whether aesthetic elements of their design can foster moral reflections; how / whether character construction of supervillains and / or their insertion in narrative ecosystems can promote critical assessment of social, political, and / or educational issues; how / whether aesthetical qualities of supervillains can encourage favorable appreciation of content and meaning in the stories where they appear

Sympathy for the (d)evil, emotional contagion, aesthetic construction, character engagement (recognition, alignment, attachment, access, allegiance), bad protagonists...

Byronic heroes, anti-heroes, fallen heroes, redeemed villains, misunderstood villains, dark doppelgangers, vigilante killers

Supervillains, fan practices and participatory cultures

Propaganda, ideology and supervillains: supervillainization of the enemy; Yellow Perils and other ethnic villains; Nazisploitation; evil species, empires and civilizations (Skrulls, Daleks, Borgs, Romulans, Klingons...)

Gender, sexuality and supervillainy: gender roles, empowerment, cross-dressing, gender shifts, eroticism, porn, sexual violence

Kinds of evil: mischief, subversion, retaliation, cruelty, sadism, atrocity, horrendous evil...

Origins of evil, nature vs. nurture, secret origins of the supervillains, psychological and sociological readings

Serial killers and other (super) human monsters, slasher psycho-killers;

Supernatural monsters as supervillains

Adapted and original supervillains in television fiction

Arch-foes, rogue galleries and corrupted superheroes in specific tv shows and fictional universes: Smallville, Gotham, the Buffyverse, Heroes, Marvel's Netflix universe, the Arrowverse, Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D., Legion, Krypton, The Tick, The Gifted, Black Lightning, Titans, Doom Patrol, Runaways, Jumper, The Boys, El vecino, Watchmen...

Supervillains in animated tv shows: Wacky Races, Superfriends, Danger Mouse, Inspector Gadget, GI Joe, Transformers, Masters of the Universe, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, The Simpsons, The Powerpuff Girls, Teen Titans Go!, Family Guy, Rick & Morty...

Supervillains in anime and tokusatsu

Super-villainous features in non-superhero tv shows: The Sopranos, Breaking Bad, The Shield, 24, Game of Thrones, House of Cards, Hawaii 5-0, Community, Mindhunter...

## REGISTRATION

Attendee with paper presentation (early birds; Dec. 15-31, 2019): 80€

Attendee with paper presentation (Jan. 1-15, 2020): 120€

Attendee without paper presentation (early birds; Dec. 15-31, 2019): 15€

Attendee without paper presentation (Jan. 1-15, 2020): 30€

## CONFERENCE TIMELINE

November 30, 2019: last day for paper proposals  
December 14, 2019: last day for notes of acceptance  
December 15, 2019: early-bird registration opens  
December 31, 2019: last day of early-bird registration  
January 1, 2020: regular registration opens  
January 15, 2020: last day of regular registration  
February 12-14, 2020: TV Supervillains Conference

Organized by:

**Research project Interacciones entre valores cognitivos y propiedades estéticas en la serialidad contemporánea (RTI2018-096596-B-I00), funded by Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades (Spanish Government).**

**Group EIKON. Equipo de Investigación de la Imagen y la Cultura Visual en el Ámbito de la Comunicación (HUM 1013).**

**Departamento de Comunicación Audiovisual y Publicidad (Universidad de Sevilla).**

**Facultad de Comunicación (Universidad de Sevilla).**

Scientific Committee:

Scott Bukatman (Stanford University)

Héctor J. Pérez López (Universitat Politècnica de València)

Jesús Jiménez Varea (Universidad de Sevilla)

Web: [http://gestioneventos.us.es/39459/detail/tv-supervillains.-comics-ecosystems-on-television\\_-the-cognitive-impact-of-supervillains.html](http://gestioneventos.us.es/39459/detail/tv-supervillains.-comics-ecosystems-on-television_-the-cognitive-impact-of-supervillains.html)